

DREISER NEWS & NOTES

The Fall 1989 issue of *Dreiser Studies* will be Richard W. Dowell's last as Editor of the journal. Hereafter all manuscripts and correspondence should be sent to the incoming Editor, Frederic E. Rusch, Department of English, Indiana State University. . . . In the Fall 1988 issue of *DS*, we announced that Harold Dies, Trustee of the Dreiser Trust, had signed an option agreement with screen writer Richard Goodwin for a TV production of *The Trilogy of Desire*. In April, Mr. Dies sent us the following update on that project: "Richard Goodwin renewed his option on the *Trilogy* for another year, showing his continued interest. If it is finally produced, it should create considerable interest in Dreiser and his work among the present generation, which, for the most part, is not familiar with his position in the field of literature. So it looks promising and hopefully the project will become a reality. . . . Ivan R. Dee, Inc., of Chicago, has recently brought out a new edition of *The Best Short Stories of Theodore Dreiser*. . . . Professor Nancy Warner Barrineau reports that she has located twenty-one of the twenty-four issues of *Ev'ry Month* edited by Dreiser. Still missing, however, are December 1895, January 1896 and February 1896. Anyone who has information regarding these issues can contact Professor Barrineau through the Department of English, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602. A fuller account of Professor Barrineau's work with *Ev'ry Month* will appear in a later issue of *DS*. . . . The University of Pennsylvania Press has published *American Authors and the Literary Marketplace since 1900* (1988), by James L. W. West III. "This book," writes Professor West in his introduction, "should encourage teachers and students to be alive to, alert to, the manifold commercial influences that operate in literature; it should foster a habit of mind, a willingness to view literary works as both aesthetic entities and salable wares." Dreiser is among the authors discussed in this study.

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IV. ABSTRACTS OF DISSERTATIONS AND THESES ON AND INCLUDING DREISER

Gunning, Gordon. "The American Novel, 1900-1950: Some Themes and Influences," *MAI*, 25 (1987), 29 (Cal. State, Dominguez Hills).

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Raphael, Linda Schermer. "Refracted Discourse in Austen, Eliot, James, Dreiser and Woolf: The Representation of Double Consciousness in Narrative," *DAI*, 48 (1987), 134A (Ohio State).

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III. REPRINTS OF EARLIER DREISER STUDIES

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- Rusch, Frederic E. "Dreiser's Introduction to Freudianism," *Dreiser Studies*, 18 (Fall 1987), 34-38.
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A DREISER CHECKLIST, 1987

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This checklist covers work on Dreiser in 1987 plus a number of items omitted from previous checklists. I wish to thank Shigeo Mizuguchi for providing the information on Dreiser studies published in Japan.

I. NEW EDITIONS, TRANSLATIONS AND REPRINTS OF DREISER'S WORKS

Amerikanskaia tragediia: roman v dvukh chastiakh [*An American Tragedy: A novel in Two Parts*]. Trans. Z. Vershininnoi and N. Gal'. 2 vols. Moskva: Izdvo "Pravda," 1987.

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"Dreiser's 'Poet of Potter's Field,'" ed. with intro. by T. D. Nostwich, *Dreiser Studies*, 18 (Fall 1987), 1-20.

"Dreiser: Autobiographical Fragment, 1911," ed. with intro. by Thomas P. Riggio, *Dreiser Studies*, 18 (Spring 1987), 12-21.

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II. NEW DREISER STUDIES AND NEW STUDIES THAT INCLUDE DREISER

Arai, Shôichirô. "Dreiser no Aimaia--Sister Carrie no Baai [Dreiser's Ambiguity in *Sister Carrie*]," *Tenri University Journal* (Japan), 152 (1986), 41-49.

University of Chicago Press, 1988), 132-33. Kaplan argues that "By posing as a laborer, and labeling himself amateur, Dreiser implies the oppositional term 'professional author'" (132).

⁶For a good discussion of Burke as a father figure in Dreiser's imagination, see Stephen C. Brennan, "Theodore Dreiser's *An Amateur Laborer*: A Myth in the Making," *American Literary Realism* (Winter 1987), 66-84. Brennan's "structuralist approach" includes mythic and Freudian interpretations of Dreiser's writing, and he makes a very plausible case for the Burke figure as a surrogate for Dreiser's father in the various versions of the Burke/Rourke story.

⁷The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, who own the copyright to "Up Hill," kindly gave their permission to publish this material.

And as I watched him and them, and stood for a few minutes with Rourke until his train came, I said to myself, "This is the attitude and this is the man--and his policy and his viewpoint are mine from this day forth. I will not whine and I will not tremble, anymore, come what may. I may not be able to write or win in that field, but I will be able to do something somewhere, and that will have to be enough--will have to do. For by the living God, this man and his men in their way, are as happy and useful as any and as good as any. Life is as you think it, no more and no less, and it can be thought of in many ways. And from now on, I will strive to present an untroubled front and do with as much or as little as I can--yet, trying, always."

And one train took them to the 138th Street junction.

And another train took me to Kingsbridge.

And in a month I was on a Sunday paper, writing page specials for a beginning. And in four years from that time I had made over three different magazines and was getting ten thousand a year.

¹See Richard W. Dowell, "Will the Real Mike Burke Stand Up, Please!" *The Dreiser Newsletter* (Spring 1983), 1-9. The various versions of this material include the following: "The Mighty Burke," *McClure's* 37 (May 1911); "The Cruise of the 'Idlewild'," *Bohemian* 17 (October 1909), rpt. in *Free and Other Stories* (New York, 1918); "The Toil of the Laborer," *New York Call*, 13 July 1913 (revised and rpt. in *Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* (New York, 1919); "The Mighty Rourke," in *Twelve Men* (New York, 1919); *The "Genius"* (New York, 1915), 285-399; "The Irish Section Foreman Who Taught Me How To Live," *Hearst's International*, 46 (August 1924); and "Down Hill and Up" published here and in *Dreiser Studies* (Fall 1988). In addition, Dreiser wrote about this period in the long unfinished manuscript *An Amateur Laborer*, later edited by Richard W. Dowell (Philadelphia, 1983).

²"The Mighty Burke," *McClure's* 37 (May 1911), 49.

³"The Mighty Rourke," in *Twelve Men* (New York, 1919), 309.

⁴"The Mighty Rourke," 296.

⁵Amy Kaplan addresses the question of Dreiser's choice of manual labor in *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: The

great city, each car interior aglow with a half hundred lights. Seemingly more prosperous citizens than myself, as I thought at the time, and a little sadly, were reclining in comfort within, looking out. I was disposed, once more, because I was leaving now and still a little dubious about myself, to be a little lorn and envious. Who was I? Here were all these well-to-do individuals riding to and from in their splendid trains, going here, there, and everywhere. And who was I? Was it not hard to get the ear of the world unless one had strength and wit and that force that is born of a sound mind and body? And was I sound again? For months I had been improving, to be sure. But could I now really write as well as I had formerly? A tremor of doubt or fear ran to my farthest nerve ends. Nevertheless, I had said I was going and I was.

I shook hands all around, to the lowest "nagur," and started for Highbridge--the nearest station--ahead of the others.

But as I reached there, having walked slowly and meditatively, there overtook and passed me, coming to wait for a local, in the baggage car of which, only, they would be permitted to ride, the little band of Italians with whom I had been working for these six months past. Their faces and hands were so dirty, their clothes were earthy rags, over their shoulders were their picks and shovels. And over one arm of each, their dinner pail. And yet as they passed, each touched his cap, for I had been a kind of assistant foreman over them, and smiled most genially. And there was Phillip whom I had often noticed, as I stood beside a trench or worked in one with him, his body all twisted and bent from years of unremitting toil, and yet whose face and manner were always pleasant, even at the end of the hardest day. And there was Angelo, old and leathern in feature, rings in his ears, who could boast that he had never missed a day's work in his seventeen years. And Matteo, spare and worn, who was at once a fine carpenter and mason and who once had declared to me, "America fine. No lika any place but America." And yet never earning more than twenty cents an hour for a ten-hour day. And even now, while his old parched countenance was wreathed with a smile. And the Calabrian--Collarbrace--he of the enormous muscles. And Mussolino. And Jimmy, "the fox," as Rourke called him. And after this cold raw day in the trenches, these men were all cheerful and grinning, glad to be going home, glad to have no more work to do until Monday.

And after them now came Rourke himself, last and not least, his stocky body arrayed in a dusty and much wrinkled steel grey suit, an old miller-white soft hat over his eyes, his hands and face rough and red, his blue eyes twinkling and his silver grey hair and mustache matching his suit. And he was smiling, too, and walking with a jaunty stride. For the work of the week was done. And tomorrow was Sunday.

very well and I want to do something else. Besides I'm all right now, and thanks to you, and I want to say that I feel that I owe it all to you, really, and that's the truth. You've taught me a lot--more than I can tell you."

"What talk have ye? What talk have ye?" was his brusque retort, for if there were one man in the world who could not endure even an honest compliment it was Rourke. He could not. Then he added: "Well, if ye must, ye must. I know that. And tis well that ye should be goin'. Ye look to be as well as aany man, Teddy," which was true. "But I'll be sorry to see ye goin'. But then its not me that can be expecting a man like ye to be contintin' himself with a job like this. Aany man can tell be lookin' at ye that its not here ye belong. But I'll be missin' ye just the same, me bye. Is it today, ye're off?"

"Not until Saturday unless you want me to go, Rourke."

He was so used to quick departures on the part of hired men that when a man spoke to him of going, he took it for granted that it was to be at once. Usually he compelled quitters to leave instantly. But in this case he went away a while and then came back. "I'll have to be gettin' a man for this work, I'm thinkin'," he observed, for the horror of all those wretched reports and O.K.s was coming over him, I'm sure.

"See here, Rourke," I said. "I'll tell you what you do. Get some young fellow who can figure and keep books to take all this crazy business of reports off your hands. You're too busy a man to be occupying your time with it. They don't understand your point of view at the office, but theirs is nonsense. They have to keep their books at the office and that's all they think about. But you get a boy and give him the same pay as a mason, twenty or twenty-five cents an hour, and carry him as a mason, on your time list. It will be all the same to the company. The chief clerk won't mind. He'll like you all the better for it. Let him do just what I've been doing."

He looked at me at first, as much to say, how dare you be making such an underhanded suggestion to me, for Rourke was as religious and squeamish on one side as he was dynamic and pagan on the other,--the wild Irish of it. Yet after another moment, he added, "Tis the only way, I suppose," and I realized, and gratefully, that at last I had put him in the way of a little laboring ease as a mason.

The Saturday that I left was raining, a cold winter rain. Up to four o'clock, or nearly dark, it had been grey and lowery. We were above Highbridge at the time. Along a magnificent highway of steel at that hour were already speeding those imposing limiteds that rush to and from the

month, for which assuredly I would get no less than fifty dollars (I had already received as much as two hundred for a story), be able to go on and try until once more I should be on my feet in a literary way.

For having found that I could write and sell such a thing as a poem, and being anxious to enlarge upon and strengthen this suddenly recovered faculty, I was decidedly less satisfied with the type of thing I was doing. Now, for quite the first time since I had been with Rourke, this world of cars, tracks, shipments and the jumbled and disordered state of alteration and construction in which from day to day we worked, irritated me not a little, a thing that so late as three months before I would not have dreamed possible. Indeed, all the notions that I had had of it at first as harbor and resting place began to change and I found myself criticizing the very things that only a little while before I had found so interesting. What was there to digging trenches, what to laying bricks? What to building walls and houses, even, of stone and wood, when I could write again, maybe.

And so it was after a particularly dreary day of this in late December that I finally made up my mind as to what I should do. By then, in spite of my doubt as to whether I should ever be able to write again, I had composed not only a number of verses, long since destroyed, but a few essays, the substance of which today appear in other forms. And I was actually planning a study of this very interesting man under whom I was working, and to whom I owed so much, to say nothing of others I had seen here. "The Cruise of the Idlewild" came to me at that time. Yet apart from these things I had completed no saleable thing. But I thought of Rourke and his courage and his viewpoint in general, and I said to myself: "What, this uneducated and floundering Rourke with his strange notions about 'nagurs,' his inability to keep his accounts without help, his wife and several children and his wretched pay can still manage to live and thrive, while I, who have already received as much as two hundred for a sketch done in ten days, and have proved that I can live on thirty a month, cannot. Or I tremble to test my skill again. I won't feel so. I won't hide away any longer. I'll go out and try again, and if I fail, I fail. I can at least go back to day labor that will keep me alive."

And accordingly, forthwith I went to my stocky, dusty chief and announced: "Rourke, I'll be leaving next week, I think. I want to go back and try to do the thing that I was meant to do if I was meant to do anything. You don't mind, do you?"

"You don't mane it?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," I replied. "You know what I get here. I can't live on it

THEY HAVE NOURISHED AS ABUNDANT RAIN.

Hark! The voices of Beauty speaking,
Morning and evening skies,
Winds and rustle of leaves,
Flight of wild fowl and the song of water.
In the Crucible of the years these have yielded goodness.
They have distilled for me as the wine of life.
With the passing of the seasons they have persuaded
As against myself have I been compelled to accept them
As the substance and the reward of my need.

And this odd effusion, a little different in form and treatment to anything I had ever written before, and expressing as I felt at the time, the very substance of my attitude toward nature, I typed it on Sunday and sent it, in what vagrom mood I scarcely know, to an editor whom I had once known and who had appeared to be friendly to me, but who, as I did not know, was no longer editor of the publication I believed him to be editing. As a matter of fact a new man had taken his place. And one day, not more than two weeks later, it was this new man who sent me a check for five dollars, saying, "I like this. Sometime—not too soon—say in a year, you might let me see something else. We use very little poetry."

Guarded and non-committal as this acceptance was, still, at that particular crisis in my life, it cheered me more than quite anything else that could have happened to me, and strengthened me into the bargain. For, as I have said, my notion in regard to myself was that I might never come to be writing anything again that would pass muster as an organized and artistic form. Whereas, now this very little thing, distilled out of my mood toward a late November afternoon and evening, had already been accepted as poetry, and almost as quickly as I had sent it, and that by a strange editor who did not know me. This fixed the new thought in me that whatever might be wrong with me, I might still write a form of cadenced, if not exactly exalted prose which bore some resemblance to poetry, if not verse.

Forthwith I decided that I must be better and that I was coming back, or would, slowly. And that if I chose to leave this interesting and different world, and essay writing again, I might after a fashion, be able to live by my pen. For, as I have said, I had been living, if not exactly comfortably, yet to me interestingly enough, for all of eight months now, on between thirty-eight to forty dollars a month, nine dollars a week. And if, as I now argued, it was possible for me to live on so little as that and I was reaching the place where I could write again, why was it not possible for me to resign and by writing so little as one single story or sketch in one

like Collarbrace there, or anyone of the min I'll be after puttin' in this trench could do the work of eight such as yerself, and never notice it by aevenin' either. An' as fer the eight of ye, ye'd go limp'in' home, I'm tellin' ye. Don't ever think that just annywaan can be a shoveler or a ditcher. There's more to it than the will or the askin' fer it, aither." And off he went to attend to something else.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding, and with his consent, too, I did so work. And long and often. Not infrequently singlehanded, I was sent to knock down some antiquated and now interfering wall somewhere or to dig up a post or two or ten, or to break up and remove a wooden sidewalk, which was to be replaced by a cement one, somewhere. And this done, I might, on occasion, receive a "well, tis good enough. Ye can go now, if ye like." And physically weary and muscle-sore, I would then shoulder my sledge or pick or shovel, and after replacing the same in the tool car, would beat a sometimes moody way to the nearest railway station, where my pass would take me to my room.

But there were times when living so, and working so, that I felt (painful and dramatic moods, these) that instead of stooping, temporarily, as I sometimes flattered myself that I was, from a higher to a lower plane in order to regain my health, that in reality, and despite any wishing of my own, by some trick of fate, I had permanently fallen to some such meager state as this and would never again be able to rise above it. For what was it, I often asked myself, that happened to my mind? And why was it that I could not write? And then in this mood, on Sundays more than any other time, I would occasionally take a pad, thinking myself to be better, maybe, or that originally I had been mistaken in my notion that I could not write directly and forcefully, and resuming some old theme begun a long time ago, would try to complete it. But finding myself dubious in regard to some part of it, becoming nervous as to plot or psychology, I would at once abandon the whole thing, convinced for the time being that my case was hopeless.

But just the same, one late November afternoon, after some seven or eight months of this, when I was still working as described, and as I was walking down the track of the Harlem division near Tuckahoe, where it skirts the very pretty Bronx River, I was especially moved and appealed to emotionally by the scene about me—the brown grass dead and rustling in the wind, a flock of crows above a distant hill to the west, the gold and scarlet of an early sinking sun. And taking a pad of O.K. blanks from my pocket, I wrote:

"An' could ye though? An ye railey think ye could. Well, turn around now and let me have a look at ye. 'Tis he," he announced to a passing foreman carpenter, "that thinks he'll be after workin' with the nagurs', an' aall day, maybe, if he takes it slow."

And then he felt first of my arms, my shoulders and my hips. And then turning, he called to a distant Italian, who was trundling a barrow of stone—Collarbrace was his sobriquet—Americanese and gang patios for Calabrian. And this individual, a medium-sized, swarthy and rather fierce-looking Italian with silver rings in his ears, finally approaching, he turned him around and said: "Now, me bye, put yer hand here and here and here." And suiting action to word he moved my thin and comparatively ridiculous hand to the right shoulder of the man before me. And from mere tossing of earth from pits from right to left, over his left shoulder, as I now learned, his right shoulder had become enlarged to almost twice the size of the left one, only being clothed, the deformity was not so noticeable. Also his left hip, due as was explained to me, to the fact that the burden of lifting dirt with the right arm and shoulder over the left shoulder automatically threw a weight or strain for the moment upon the left hip, that by degrees had become enlarged also—very much larger than the right. Also the muscles of his right arm were very much greater than this left, due to the special burdens put upon it over the period of years. I was astonished and really shocked. It was a real deformity. And yet, as I could see, the man was very proud of it and smiled as Rourke displayed him.

"And ye expect, maybe, to work with a man like that," he went on, "or any waan of these min for that matter. And what would ye be doin' down in the trench, me bye, once it got to be not one or two, but four or six feet deep, stoop down and throw a man's sized shovel-full of dirt from the bottom up over yer shoulder to the ground above? Or maybe a hundred or five hundred in the course of a day? I'm watchin' ye. Ye may play with a shovel if ye like. There's no harm in yer amusin' yerself while these other min work. But as fer workin' with thim, well, aall I ask of ye is that ye keep outa their way," and he fixed me again with that same amused and contemptuous look.

And for the first time in my life I realized what a ridiculous and contemptuous figure I must be to a man like this in this world of genuine, physical labor. What a spindling! What a runt! I work with a pick and shovel! I dig a trench! And in a little while this same practical and very unsentimental foreman of mine came back to say: "I'm pickin' min, me bye, fer work like this; ye pick 'em exactly as another man picks a horse to pull a load. I can tell be the walk of a man as he comes towards me to ask fer work whether I'd have him fer work like this or not. A man

make a train that would get me there in time. Did I swear? Yes. Did I groan? You bet. Just the same I grew better and slept. Incidentally I found that not only my hands, but my muscles were roughening and hardening. For one cannot carry cement in bags on one's shoulder, nor yet wheel bricks or crushed stone in barrows, without some result.

At last my appetite, which in Brooklyn had fallen to a mere mincing and nibbling at times, was here raised to the voracious class. I have described the type of food I was eating. Just the same, some six months after I had been with Rourke I could eat anything put before me, and much more than I could afford to buy at the time, I assure you. And here, if you please, I was not ashamed to eat anything that was cheap and nourishing. On the contrary.

At that time, as many will recall--1903--there still flourished nearly everywhere the free lunch, and it was possible in the cheaper saloons at least, for a nickel or a dime invested in a glass of beer, to pick from the ever-adjacent lunch counter, enough cheese, sliced bologna, pickles, sauerkraut, salted cold slaw and the like to satisfy at least a moderate appetite, for the time being, anyhow. Again, as I have said, watching the Italians and seeing how hard they were on their meager fare of a small loaf of bread and two or three tomatos or onions or apples, I ate the same, often. At night, having a pass and being able to go up and down the road, I fixed on certain minor restaurants here and there where I could get a meal for a quarter, at most forty cents, and between these and occasional free lunches for variety, I did well enough. In fact, in spite of a growing appetite, I never knew what it was to be hungry.

In regard to working with day laborers and attempting to do the work that they did, however, I would like to interpolate some deductions which came to me by degrees and which opened my eyes to the immense and (for the average clerically trained person) absolutely impassable gulf which lies between the man who is an ordinary born and bred working man of the pick and shovel variety and one who is not. For one day, early in my service with Rourke, seeing the lines being set for a long trench which was to be three feet wide and seven feet deep, I said, "Rourke, I think I'll get a pick and shovel and work on that, too."

"And will ye, me bye," he exclaimed, almost sardonically and contemptuously, and fixing me with a genial and decidedly amused eye. "An' how loang do ye think ye'll be workin' on it, after ye begin?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied, "but I should think I could work a few hours, anyhow, maybe all day, if I took it slow."

carry bricks or cement or sand or what not in a wheelbarrow. Also, single-handed, or with one or two Italians to help me, I would unload a half carload of bricks somewhere or an entire car of stone. Again with Rourke and one or two Italians, I would "set the lines" for walls or piers for a freight house or a covered platform at a station. And with a dozen of them to aid me, I personally took up all the cobblestones in the square facing the depot at White Plains, and on my knees with the rest of them afterwards, found actual delight in proving that I could lay as good a road bed of vitrified brick as the next. And of as handsome a pattern.

For somehow, as I found after a time, the spirit of the wild, but genial Rourke, his love of work, his puzzled and inexplicable, and yet convincing and inspiring love of life had entered into me, and I was wild to be as vigorous, as dynamic, as enthusiastic and yet as contented with things as they were, as was he.

"No, no Teddy, me bye," I can hear him correcting me. "Ye mane well, but ye're goin' about it wrong. Tis this way. One end so and one so. Now, will ye be after gettin' the pattern? Tis so that one brick holds the other from movin' whatever happens."

And following his directions closely I found that not only was the work easier, my speed greater, but the quaint and interesting pattern which he was seeking to achieve with his bricks, easy to follow. And about us at the time in that square were speeding the automobiles and carriages or traps of the inextricably wealthy who thought us hopeless drudges, I am sure.

Again, there was this business of arising earlier, and in consequence of retiring earlier, a thing which for years before this catastrophe descended upon me, I had not done. For even in Brooklyn, before being compelled to undertake something like this, I had, because of a state which bordered very closely upon insomnia, walked the streets at night, sometimes until one, two or even three in the morning, and then retiring but not sleeping, arising late the next day unrefreshed.

But here--how different. How very different! For being out in the open, and shunted here and there and rejoicing in him and his point of view, as I did (a fire in cold weather he was, or a girl in loneliness), I found myself of a sudden sleeping very well, indeed. Quite soundly. For not only, according to the exigencies of the work, was I compelled to travel here and there--to White Plains, Valhalla, Brewster, Fordham, Tarrytown and Peekskill--but because of a rule of the company that demanded that we take the earliest available train to be at work as near seven as possible, I was sometimes forced to rise from my bed in Kingsbridge as early as four, once as early as three-thirty, in order to

would the reports be?" And I heartily echoed, "Where?"

But I can give no more space to the eccentricities of this interesting man here. You may find him painted at length in *Twelve Men* ("The Mighty Rourke"). Suffice it to say that under him, and by degrees, my own mood changed but so insensibly at first that I was in no wise aware of it. For he was so magnetic, so healthy, so variable, so in tune with the intense whirr and buzz of life, that I, who was inclined to stand apart and dream about it, could not avoid being engaged by all that he was doing, and that I, as assistant, was called upon to do and forget about myself. Nor would he brook any solemnity or idle brooding on my part at any time. On the contrary!

"Come, Teddy, me bye, what is it yer thinkin' of now? Not draymin' again, aare ye? And with all we have to do this day. 'Tis the lines we have to set now for this trench. And then tis the boards that'll have to be measured up and placed. And this thing dug out quick, for tis no time we have to lose. And then ye'll be after goin' to the ahffice to see about the stone and the sand and the cement."

It was Rourke who would give me no time to think about myself ever, not one single moment. He was always after me like a collie after sheep for one thing and another. And yet so cheerful and amusing and semi-affectionate and considerate was he, without appearing to be, really, always insistent and yet genial, that I came fairly to love him, so fascinating was he to me from the first. And I would have done anything to help him in any way that I could.

But usually since this clerical work was intermittent and not to my taste anyhow, the mere swing of pick or shovel far more to my liking, I preferred to work at whatever the "guineas" or "wops," or as he always called them "the nagurs," were compelled to work at, and do it gladly. For actually, at first and for a long time after I joined this Irishman and his group, I was so fixed by the thought, and rightly as I see it now, that physical work and that only would help me break that introspective and self-centered train of thought which seemed to prevent my doing anything at all in the writing line, that I preferred to work with them and exactly as they worked.

In consequence, being equipped with an old pair of trousers and a dark blue woolen shirt which I had from somewhere, I would, after my reports were out of the way, get down in a ditch or hole with a pick or shovel or upon the scaffolding with Rourke, and forcing a growing wall which one or two or five of these Italians might be building (and this in spite of the Bricklayers union) and for twenty cents an hour, if you please,

building at Melrose--all of which required an amount of running and figuring, to say nothing of the actual work of superintending and constructing, which Rourke alone could look after. It seemed ridiculous to me at the time that anyone doing all this hard practical work should not be provided with a clerk or an accountant to take at least some of this endless figuring off his hands. At the same time, if he had been the least bit clever, he could have provided himself with one permanently by turning one of his so-called laborers into a clerk, but plainly it had never occurred to him. He depended on his family to assist him nights on this part of the work. The preliminary labor of ordering and seeing that the material was duly shipped and unloaded was one man's work. And yet Rourke was expected to do it all.

In spite of all this, however, he displayed himself a masterful worker. I have never seen a better. He preferred to superintend, of course, to get down into the pit or up on the wall and measure and direct. At the same time, when necessary to expedite a difficult task, he would toil for hours at a stretch, with his trowel and his line and his level and his plumb-bob, getting the work into shape, and you would never hear a personal complaint from him concerning the weariness of labor. On the contrary, he would whistle and sing until something went wrong, when suddenly you would hear the most terrific uproar of words: "Come out av that! Come out, now! Jasas Christ, man, have ye no sinse at all? What aare ye doin? What did I tell ye? Have ye no raison in ye, no sinse, ye hathen nagur?"

You would have imagined the most terrible calamity had happened; and yet, all told, it might be nothing of any great import. It might last for a few moments, during which time the Italians would be seen hurrying excitedly to and fro; and then there would come a lull, and Rourke would be heard to raise his voice in tuneful melody, singing or humming or whistling some old-fashioned Irish "Come-ye-all."

But the thing in Rourke which would have pleased anyone, and that did worlds for me mentally and physically, was his ready grasp of the actualities of life--his full-fledged knowledge that work is the thing, not argument, or reports, or plans, but the direct accomplishment of something tangible--the thing itself. Thus, while I was working with him, seeing to it as best I might that nothing clerical should disturb him, still there were times when I had to have data from him and at once, in order to send in reports. Yet if the sky fell, as I found, and eight thousand chief clerks threatened to march upon him in a body demanding reports, he would as imperturbably make me wait until the work was done. And once when I insisted on interrupting him to question him concerning some of these pestering aftermaths of labor, he shut me off with, "The reports! The reports! What good are the reports! If it wasn't fer the work, where

Woodlawn and secured the bolts, after which I went down to the "ahffice" and reported. There I found the chief clerk, the same whom I have described, in a high state of dudgeon because Rourke had failed to render an O.K. for this and some other things. He wanted to know what explanation Rourke had to offer, and when I suggested that the latter thought, apparently, that he could leave all consignments of goods in one station or another until such time as he needed them before he O.K.'d them, he fairly foamed.

"Say," he almost shouted, shoving his hands distractedly through his hair, "what does he think I am? How does he think I'm going to make up my books. He's a damn fool, and you go back and tell him I said so. He's been long enough on the road to know better. You go back and tell him I want a signed form for everything consigned to him the moment he knows its waiting for him. He's got to come to time about this now, or something's going to drop. I wish he'd let you attend to it. It will save an awful lot of trouble in this office and it may save him his job. There's one thing sure. He's got to come to time from now on, or either he quits or I do." I explained that I would do my best and came away.

When I returned, however, I decided to be politic. I might not be able to work very much with a pick and shovel and this was about all that was left outside of that. Hence I explained as best I could the sad plight of the chief clerk, who stood in danger of losing his job unless these things came in promptly.

"You see how it is, Rourke, don't you," I pleaded.

He seemed to see, but he was still angry.

"An O.K. blank! An O.K. blank!" he echoed contentiously, but still in a somewhat more conciliatory spirit. "He wants an O.K. blank, does he? Well, I expect ye might as well give thim to him, then. Ye'd think the man lived on thim things, the way he's always callin' fer thim; its somethin' awful. An O.K. blank! An O.K. blank!" And he sputtered to silence.

A little while later he humorously explained that he had "clane fergot thim, anyhow."

The ensuing month was a busy one for me. We had a platform to lay at Morrisiana, a chimney to build at Tarrytown, a sidewalk to lay and a street square to replace at White Plains. Also a large cistern to dig and wall in at Tuckahoe. Besides these, there were platforms to build at Van Cortland and Mount Kisco, water-towers at Highbridge and Ardsley, a culvert and an ash-pit at Bronx Park, and some forty concrete piers for a

and a grass-plot, a vast improvement upon the mussy yard and shop, whatever the river view, and seemed to me a veritable haven of rest.

Rourke was down in an earthen excavation under the depot platform when I arrived, measuring and calculating with his plumb-bob and level, and when I looked in on him hopefully, he looked up and smiled.

"So here ye are at last," he said with a grin.

"Yes," I laughed.

"Well, ye're just in time. I want ye to go down to the ahffice."

"Certainly," I replied, but before I could say more, he climbed out of his hole, his white jeans odorous of the new-turned earth, and fished in the pocket of an old gray coat which lay beside him for a soiled and crumpled letter, which he finally unfolded with his thick, clumsy fingers. Then he held it up and looked at it defiantly.

"I waant ye to go to Woodlawn," he continued, "An' look after some bolts that aare there—there's a keg av thim—and sign the bill fer thim, an' ship thim down to me. An' thin I waant ye to go down to the ahffice an' take thim this O.K." Here again he fished around and produced another crumpled slip, this time of a yellow color (how well I came to know them) which I soon learned was an O.K. blank, a form which had to be filled in and signed for everything received, if no more than a stick of wood or a nail. The company demanded these of all foremen, in order to keep its records straight. At the same time Rourke kept talking of the "nonsense av it," and the "onraisonableness" of demanding O.K.'s for everything. "Ye'd think someone was goin' to stable thim from thim," he declared irritably and defiantly.

I saw at once that some infraction of the railroad rules had occurred and that he had been "jacked up" about it, as the railroad men expressed it. And now he was pleased that someone had arrived who would relieve him of this damnable "nonsinse"—or so he hoped. In fact, as time proved, this was my sole reason for being here.

He flung a parting shot at his superior as I departed.

"Tell him I'll sign fer thim when I get thim, an' not before," he declared.

I went on my way, knowing full well that no such message was for delivery, and that he did not intend that it should be. I went off to

ye."

"Yes?" I said tolerantly. "And how much do you get, Rourke?"

"Two and a half a day."

"You don't say," I replied, pretending admiration.

At the same time I could not help thinking that he was better situated than myself at the time. The sight of the foreman for whom I was working was a torture to my soul. I wanted to get away from him, if only I could find a foreman who could make use of me. And the more I eyed this particular specimen of foreman the better I liked him. I decided to appeal to him to take me on his staff.

"How would you like to take me, Mr. Rourke, and let me work for you?" I asked hopefully, after explaining to him why I was here.

"Shewer," he replied. "Ye'd do fine."

"Would I have to work with the Italians?" I asked, wondering how I would make out with a pick and shovel. My frame was so spare at the time that the question must have amused him, considering the type of physique he required.

"There'll be plenty av work fer ye to do without ever yer layin' a hand to a pick or shovel," he replied comfortingly. "Shewer, that's no work fer white men. Let the nagurs do it. Look at their backs an arms, an' then look at yers."

I was ready to blush for shame. These poor Italians, whom I was so ready to underestimate, were immeasurably my physical superiors.

"But why do you call them negroes, Rourke?" I asked. "They're not black."

"Well, bedad, they're not white, that's wan thing shewer," he added. "Aany man can tell that be lookin' at thim."

I had to smile. It was so dogmatic and unreasoning.

Not long after that I put in a plea to be transferred to him at his request, and it was granted. The day that I joined his flock, or gang as he called it, he was at Williamsbridge, a little station north on the Harlem, building a concrete coal-bin. It was a pretty place, surrounded by trees

work that way. He loved noise and a great stir. Constantly trotting to and fro, shouting, "Come Matt! Come Jimmy! Hurry now! Bring the picks! Bring the shovels!" I was absolutely fascinated and stood and stared.

But after a time, and to my equal astonishment, I began to discover that he was not as bad as he seemed, not as terrible as he sounded, and then I began to like him. For, although he was so insistent with his commands, his men, as I noticed, did not seem to mind nor to strain themselves working, and that interested me not a little. He would stand over them, crying "Up with it! Up with it! Down with it! Down with it!" until you would have imagined their nerves would be worn to a frazzle. And yet, as strange as it may seem, and did to me, they did not seem to mind. On the contrary, their steps in the main were as leisurely as those of idlers on Fifth Avenue; they carried ugly, rough cement-splashed boards as one would an object of great value. One could not help smiling at the incongruity of it; it was farcical. Finally, gathering the full import of it all, I ventured to laugh, and he turned on me with a sharp and yet not unkindly retort.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" he mocked. "If ye had to work as hard as these min, ye wouldn't laugh."

"Is that so?" I replied. "Well, I don't see that they're killing themselves, or you, either. You're not as fierce as you sound."

Then I explained that I was not laughing at them but at him, and he took it all in good part. Since I was only a nominal laborer here, permitted to work for my health at fifteen cents an hour, we fell to conversing about railroad matters and in this way our period of friendship began.

As I learned that morning, Rourke was the foreman-mason for minor tasks for all that part of the railroad that lay between New York and fifty miles out on three divisions. He had a dozen or so men under him and was in possession of one car, which was shunted back and forth between the places in which he happened to be working. He was a builder of anything that could be made out of crushed stone and cement, or bricks and stone, and he was sent here and there as necessity required. As he explained to me, he sometimes rose as early as four a.m. in order to get to his work by seven. The great railroad company was no gentle master, but as he himself confessed, he did not mind hard work—he liked it. He had been working now for the company for all of twenty-two years, rain or shine. "Shewer, have to be there," he observed once with his quizzical, elusive Irish grin. "They're not payin' me wages for lyin' in bed. If ye was to get up that way yerself every day fer a year, me b'y, it'd make a man av

youth by degrees slipping away. And here also were these obviously underpaid and in most cases, as I saw them, markedly depressed and contentious and sullen men. And I did not like my life or this scene or my prospects. On the contrary I wanted to get out and away from it as speedily as possible. Yet I could not, because of some inhibition or kink in my own mind. Was I losing my power to write for good, or was I losing my mind for good? Besides I did not like the foreman here. He was too persistent, drastic and irritable, and I began to decide after a time, about the tenth or twelfth week after I had been here, that this was no place for me and that no general and effective improvement in me would occur unless I got out from under him. I think I was mistaken, but still this man created a too dismal and troubled scene for me. I wanted to work under someone who was more pleasing--less driving, and where the personal, if not the physical aspect of life would be more pleasing to view. And I began to think of applying to my chief clerk again.

But just then another incident or contact occurred which quite solved my whole problem for me in that respect. For one morning as I was loading a car with my two amiable companions, Jack and Bill, who should arrive on the scene to undertake the resetting of an engine bed but one Michael Rourke, mason-foreman, as his time cards read, together with a dozen Italians, all short and swarthy fellows. And my first glimpse of him was when I came back into the engine room to get a drink and an apple out of my coat. And there he was--four square to the world, as it were. And outside, on a side track near the door, was his tool car. And he himself was standing in the doorway of the shop where the work was to be conducted, coat off, sleeves rolled up, and shouting with true Irish insistence, "Come, Matt! Come, Jimmie! Get the shovels, now! Get the picks! Bring some sand here. Bring some cement, Jasas Christ, I must have some cement! What are ye all doin? Hurry, now, hurry! Bring the cement!" And then, having concluded this amazing fanfare, calmly turning to gaze about as if he were the only one in the world who had the right to stand still.

"What a slave-driver," thought I. "What a brute!" To think, all the men on this road should have to work under such a master. And yet he was not unpleasant to look at, either. He was medium in height, thick of body and neck, with short gray hair and mustache, and bright, clear, twinkling Irish gray eyes, and he carried himself with an air of unquestionable authority. The job he was bossing was not very intricate or important, but it was interesting. It consisted of digging a trench ten by twelve feet, and shaping it up with boards into a form, after which concrete was to be mixed and poured in, and some iron rod set to fasten the engine to--an engine bed, no less. It all might have been conducted with far less excitement, I thought, but plainly this individual could not

for one dollar a day, when they might be getting one-ten or one-twenty-five.

Well, anyhow, this is what this gang did for me. Seeing them arrive one day about a week after I had been here, and worrying as to my food and lodging budget, I observed a very curious thing. It was noon. Having unloaded about six cars of stone in about fifteen or twenty minutes, and the noon whistle blowing, they sat down together and ate—what? Almost each and every one of them a slice of black Italian bread and either a tomato or two with salt, or an onion or two with salt, or a turnip or two with salt. Some varied this by eating a tomato and an onion, or an onion and a turnip. And I thought, "Well, that must be not only cheap but nourishing. If they can shovel stone like that all day and then for lunch eat a tomato or two and a piece of black bread, why not try it?" And if they can live on it, most certainly I can. And forthwith I did. And it worked quite well. For instead of my lunch costing me twenty-five and even thirty cents it was cut for a period of two or three weeks to not more than eight or ten cents. For I bought Italian black bread at an Italian camp outside Kingsbridge for five cents a loaf, enough for two days, and tomatoes and onions by the pound. And I found my lunch excellent, for a while. Later, growing a little weary of it, I varied the diet with apples, bananas and occasionally bits of smoked sausage, also by the pound. But my lunch expense for long over a month or more never rose above fifteen cents. And I sometimes had the same for breakfast.

Physically and economically in so far as I could see now I was doing well enough, only my mental and social state being so low or awry, and in spite of various new scenes and individuals, I was constantly brooding. For, as you may well guess, in spite of my determination in Brooklyn to do something to save myself, I did not want to be here at all. For it should be remembered that this was that period in our American social and national development when the social and financial demonstrations of the Four Hundred in Newport, as well as in Wall Street, were the talk of Europe and America. And they interested me as much as they did the others, evoked sharp thoughts as to how my life contrasted with theirs. For it was the day of parties and teas and dances, even, given in honor of cats, dogs and pet monkeys at Newport and elsewhere. Also the seventy-five thousand dollar private car and the three hundred thousand dollar private yacht were a commonplace. Likewise the London presentation to the Queen, the Cairo reception by the Khedive. There was no end of palaver in the newspaper, at least, as to the most trifling and silliest movement or doing within the sacred precincts of the Four Hundred.

Yet there I was in this shop and caryard. And here was my golden

the meaty and insensitive, to whom no doubt Jeffords had repeatedly recited the miseries of his life, just as Jeffords is going out of the gate, and looking after him most fatalistically and stolidly, observes to me: "Well, it's a funny thing, you know, but ever since Bill lost his right eye, he ain't had no luck at all."

"You don't say," I said. But I began to reflect on how much luck Bill had had before he lost his eye—four years before—and after Jack was out of sight, I began to laugh. And the more I thought about it, the louder I laughed, because in my own miserable state, this somehow served to reverse my whole mental attitude toward life and myself—made it all so ridiculous and fantastic that I leaned against the inside of the car in which I was working and haw-hawed, until a yard man passing, stopped to ask: "Somepin funny?"

"Somepin very funny," I replied.

"Gee, I wish I could feel as good as you do about anything," he added. And that struck me as so profoundly grotesque that I was suddenly seized with a pain in my side and had to give over laughing entirely.

But to continue.

Of the pathetic aspects of these men I could say much, except that I doubt if it would prove interesting. One of the things that fascinated me enormously at the time, however, was the amount of work that was exacted from those who were the poorest paid. For instance, these two men, Jack and Bill. And a gang of guineas in the yard who did all the real lifting and pulling and hauling and were paid twelve and a half cents an hour, I believe. Then there was a still cheaper group or gang as I discovered that worked under a foreman by the name of Kilty. This was the carload gang. Whenever supplies of stone, sand, brick, lumber, ties or nails were to be rushed to a certain spot and there, between the schedules of through trains, unloaded and the empties removed, his gang did it. And there were always lots to be rushed somewhere. And when they arrived at a certain spot and had to get out again in a hurry, I wish you might have seen the stone or the coal or the sand or the cement or lumber fly. It was "up with it, out with it," "up with it, out with it." And Kilty on the sidelines gesticulating and yelling until he was red in the face. And the pay of these men! One dollar per day—no more, no less. They were "padrone" men, as someone whispered to me. And they spoke no English. And they were newly arrived in America, just off the boat somewhere. And they lived in gangs or camps and specially provided lodgings somewhere—work cars, maybe, until some shrewd Italian contractor, a rival of the padrone's, "wised them up" to the folly of working

interested me about him was that in spite of teeth that showed like a group of yellow fangs when he talked or laughed and ears that stood out like small fans, and eyes small and askew, still there was something about him so affable and placative that criticism, in so far as I was concerned at least, was at once disarmed. He suggested at once honesty, simplicity and geniality. Also a love of work as well as of play that fascinated me.

But I will not extend this group picture. There were perhaps two score of men here, some more talented as workmen than others, but all of whom would be worth describing had one time or space. But none of all those present were any more picturesque or different than both Jack or Bill, the two men with whom I worked, most of the time--the dubbiest of all the dubs present. And in that connection, let me a tale unfold.

From infancy on, Bill Jeffords, probably as much because of his physical deficiencies as the clods of parents who had bequeathed him life, had been driven and kicked and harried until by now he was sour and decidedly unfriendly, and no wonder. It was up early and down late from his fifth or sixth year on, as I later heard from him and Jack. The son of ignorant impoverished Vermont farmers. And his earliest recollection concerned a room or windswept crevice in a garret of a farmhouse. His clothes were rags. Often he went barefoot in winter unless neighbors deigned to provide him shoes that were too big for him and had to be kept on by tying rags around them. And there were cows to milk, pigs to feed, milk to deliver, wretched chores of all sorts to do, until at the age of sixteen, he chose to run away, because no money was ever given him--not a penny. Hence he went with nothing. Not even schooling. But once out in the world he was but little, if any, better treated. For having no training except that relating to the farm, it was to that that he must adhere. And he connected himself with a dairy which served him but little better. finally, in this connection he was horned by a savage cow in such a way as to injure his right hip and cause him to limp slightly. And later after marrying, and associating himself with this railroad, a bolt had flown from somewhere and injured his right eye so badly that it had to be removed. And now, hearken.

One day, while I worked with him, came a message to the office that his wife had been run over by an automobile and seriously injured and that he was to come at once to some emergency hospital. And he departed forthwith, so puzzled and flattened and generally terrorized by this crass and unpropitious accident that it was reducing to observe him. In fact, I felt painfully sorry for him and was thrown in a dark state brooding about how brutally life appeared to harass some individuals and without justice, in so far as I could see, and how aimlessly and indifferently it coddled others. But, allons. Up comes Jack, the stodgy,

--didn't care for them, he once told me. But oh, Christy Mathewson, the pitcher! And would the Giants or the Cubs win the pennant this year. (You may read a whole story of him in *Free and Other Stories*, called "The Cruise of the Idlewild.") And in spite of the heat of the engine room and his three hundred pounds, he did well enough as a workingman, as important work as any other about the place. After May, as a rule, his shirt was off and his suspenders down, and great welts of fat showed through his thin cotton undershirt. But always he was cheerful and gay. Mostly he stood in the engine room door which looked out over the blue and glistening waters of the Hudson and the Harlem, and watching the many yachts of wealthy men at anchor there, would give vent to some such thought as "Woodenja think them fellers would feel poorty good sittin out there on the poop deck of them there yachts smokin' their perfectos, eh?" "Wooden that be swell for you and me, eh, sport?" "Couldn' we just ride around to Newport or Bar Harbor now, eh? Haw, haw, that's the life fer you and me, eh?" And he would most painfully and genially chuck me in the ribs or nudge me at shoulder or arm. I liked him so much that I longed to be around him all the time, only I didn't dare. There was too much work to do. But when I was, and would acquiesce in his moods, he would chuckle and shake his fat sides until the whole world seemed better because of his idle dreams.

And then again there was Jimmy Fornes, the blacksmith, whose shop was a part of the large wooden factory that stood by the river, and through which, to get to the engine room as well as my locker, I often had occasion to go. He was such a chunky and powerful little man, a veritable Titan of sorts, but very undersized. Indeed his arms and legs, by reason of his work, were swollen to an enormous size. In addition he had a squarish head that supported a chin of a most defiant cut.

"Whang, whang, whang." I can hear the licks of his sledge resounding throughout the yard and between the adjacent hills. And he was interested in raising white leghorns as a side line and trying to sell everybody eggs and chickens for growing or hatching, in order to eke out a moderate livelihood, I guessed. I named him "The Village Smith," and he liked that very much, was quite set up by the sobriquet after a time, because I told him of Longfellow's poem, and where and how to find it in the local Dobbs Ferry Library.

Again, he was assisted in turn by Jimmy Sudds, his helper, an even smaller, dirtier and more gnarled specimen than his master. In fact Jimmy, when I first saw him, looked to me, not unlike a very small and very powerful gorilla. His coat was three, and his trousers at least two times too big for him, and his shoes were also too large, and probably picked up in some second-hand place somewhere. The thing that

the work here in general was not being done fast enough, or that some one here or there might not be working, or that someone might be stealing something from the yard. And in consequence, and despite the fact that there was a high board fence around the place with a watchman at the gate, still he would come rushing out of the front door of the factory, like a veritable ogre, and like a lean, long-armed chimpanzee, go skipping or skating--so his motions suggested themselves to me--here and there, about the grounds and sheds, in and around the platforms and cards, upstairs, downstairs, between lumber piles, then upstairs into his office again, or through the large shop, looking and squinting the while, his small, sharp ferret-like eyes roving here and there like the ray of a searchlight. And since he never smiled or greeted anyone, or rarely paused except when something was wrong, one felt uncomfortable in his presence, even though one were performing the thing one was set to perform well enough, as perfect as it could be done. Indeed it seemed to me after a time as though he doubted everyone, himself included, and he had the faculty of making everyone, myself not excepted, feel doubtful about himself and his future here. But, oh, the ordinary references to him about the place. They would not bear repeating here.

Next in interest to me in this group of men was Big John Peters, the engineer of the factory, as amusing and fat and simple and good-hearted a person as I have ever known, anywhere. His engine room was at that extreme point of land which reached farthest out between the two rivers. And from this vantage point he was permitted, when not shovelling shavings or studying the stem gauge, to sit or lean in his doorway and view the beautiful junction of the two rivers. And on hot days, in addition to a chair, he had rigged up an awning outside his engine room wall, underneath which he could sit and read his newspaper. A glorious job as I came later to feel, since every other blessed man about the whole plant was working, and working hard.

But that humorous, ignorant, simple temperament! He was taller than myself and weighed three hundred, as against my one hundred thirty-seven and a half. And he was as genial and unimportant as a child. His great thought and hope was, I am sure, that some day when he was about seventy, he would have saved enough at stationary engineering to have paid for the small house in which he lived in White Plains. Also that he would have enough to bury himself and his wife respectably. And his two sons and daughter would be educated properly in the public schools--get jobs and marry or both and get off his hands. And in the meanwhile he was reading, reading, reading--the newspapers only--and laughing at Knock the Monk, and Henpecko the Monk, and the Katzenjammer Kids and the Hall Room Boys and the Newlyweds and nothing else. There were no movies then, and he had no money to spare for theatres or vaudeville

Belgian draft-horses. And though the world wagged on and kingdoms rose and fell, here they were, coming daily in the same old dirty thread-bare suits, their brown hats as worn and melancholy as decayed wood, their shoes as heavy and squeaky as a rusty door. And for ten hours each day they squeaked all about the yard—squeak, squeak, squeak, the two of them always together, carrying or fetching or piling or unpling in cars, in bins, on the ground. And through the day they worked with that painful regularity which springs from the knowledge in some that in so far as they are concerned, it makes not one bit of difference in one's position in life whether one hurries or goes slow. As one of these two once said to me: "the Vanderbilts don't know you're here." Each received only seventeen and a half cents an hour. Each had been with the company for nearly eight years. Each saw no future for himself but this.

Let me present a few other characters as quickly and briefly as I can. There was, for instance, Malachi Dempsey, a man who ran a dummy engine in the yard. He was not a union engineer, of course—a chunky, secretive, thin-lipped, tight-mouthed person, who was as full of fears and superstitions and dreads of all kinds as anyone I have ever known. He was so ignorant that he did not know the meaning of the word Europe. And he came from Ireland. His church, his flat, his pipe, six children at thirty-four years of age, and his wife, last and not least, constituted his world. He thought, I am telling you exactly, that it was sinful to eat meat on Friday—a real crime, no less. Also, as he once told me, that if he didn't go to church on Sunday he would not only go to Hell after death, sure, but that in this world he would have no luck, either, a situation which struck me as rather compelling. His pay was only twenty cents an hour and on that he was supporting a wife and six children, as best he might. In addition he believed that his foreman had it in for him and there was a dark desire on his part to do something to the foreman, at the same time that he was fawning like a servant upon him. He thought of the company always as some great powerful thing that could do something dreadful to him if he failed to keep in its good graces. And the supervisor of building whom he had seen on a few occasions was of so remote and starry a world, that seeing him descend from the train once, he exclaimed to several of us standing near, "Cheese it, everybody." (We were doing nothing to *cheese*, really.) "Here comes the supervisor." And when I said, "Why cheese it? We're all working, aren't we?" He exclaimed, "I mean, quit talking. You don't want him to see you talkin', do you? I don't, anyhow." And his thin lips drew most firmly and tightly over his teeth and there was nothing more to be had from him until the supervisor had left the grounds.

I have referred to Mr. Strong, the foreman. He was really a dark and cynical and nervous and suspicious person who was eternally afraid that

stocky, cumbersome horses of men—Bill Jeffords and Jack Duncan, as I soon learned their names to be—whose business it was to load and unload cars of supplies that were either being daily shunted in here by a freight engine or taken out. And there was carrying and sealing and piling in bins, or piling out of bins onto platforms preparatory to car-loading, all sorts of things—lumber, manufactured furniture, nails, bolts—a long, long list. Yet there was fresh air in plenty and sunlight, too.

And in the shop was that world of busy men, most of whom could be seen through the windows and doors. And all day long one could hear the whirr of saws, the whine of planes, the lamming of an anvil, men planing or painting or staining or working over the delicate processes that make rough boards into really very attractive-looking furniture, tables, chairs, book-cases and what not. And the storehouses appeared to contain everything from nails to rails, from lumber to switch lights. It was not an uninteresting place by any means.

But the spirit of this world, as contrasted with the one I had known—that of the writer, idler and dreamer. For now I was thrown with and compelled to synchronize myself with a type of mind that to me was but vaguely, if at all, sensible to the things, moods, ideas, concepts that were interesting to me. These were concerned, as I soon learned, only with such matters as whether the company would be laying off or taking on more men, whether there would be two or three more cars of a given thing likely to show up this day, whether the six-day bicycle races at Madison Square would be won by so and so, whether Tom Sharkey was a better fighter than Bob Fitzsimmons, whether fishing was as good off Sheepshead Bay as off City Island.

And one man, a German, a typical hewer of wood and drawer of water, confided to me that day, that daily he came from some faraway point in South Brooklyn to this distant factory job. For he had been a lumberman connected with some shipping company in that region. And he had been so imprudent or foolish as to buy a house and lot on time over there and hence, on account of rent and time payment problems, could not very well leave it. Yet work being slack he had hunted for weeks until he was quite desperate, and then at last he had come upon this place some twenty miles away. It necessitated his getting up at 4:15 and not returning home until 8:45. And he paid two car fares to and from Grand Central Station each day.

And again there were Jack and Bill, the two men with whom I was ordered to work for some two months, before I decided to do some inside work. Those stolid, unimaginative men! Horses, really. They reminded me in their thick and never-to-be destroyed brown overalls of great

balcony could be caught a glimpse of the Harlem River. An eight-story apartment house now stands there.

I hurried back to the Mills Hotel, feeling that as wretched as was this room, I was making a great improvement over the Mills and secured my bag. Then having eaten a fifteen cent meal and presented my pass, I rode free to Kingsbridge, a privilege I greatly relished at the time. And upon reaching my wretched room I cautioned my landlord as to the extreme need of my being called at six, since I had to be at "Spike" at seven, and the train passed here at 6:50.

But the peculiar world into which I was now adventuring. After quite ten years of literary and newspaper work, it seemed most strange. For on the 6:50 train from Grand Central were only workmen in soiled and greasy clothes and hats, most of them carrying dinner pails or tin lunch-boxes and smoking pipes that would have laid low a pole-cat. The physical odors of the only occasionally washed! Ordinarily I am not so very sensitive as to life and its facets. But these! And that yard and factory and storehouse. As beautiful as was the scenery about, and quaint as was this shop with its attendant sheds snuggled down by the water when one was passing on the train, being a working part of it was not quite the same thing, I assure you. For it was surrounded by a high, yellow board fence. And inside were cars, sheds, piles of lumber, barrels of oil, car-wheels, car tracks--a mixture and jumble of many things. Almost everything immediately needed or made for the road was stored or kept there. And inside the factory, where various kinds of office furniture and fixtures were made, were men--carpenters, lathers, cabinet makers, jig and handsaw experts--who received as low as seventeen and a half and as high as twenty-five cents an hour, or two and a half dollars a day, but no more. For that was still the day of the dollar-a-day guinea even here in New York--men who were hired and leased in bulk by the padrone. And this was a non-union shop and yard. In fact, the New York Central, and all other roads were, as I then learned, non-union. And the company had spies and pickets and detectives on every hand, whose business it was to spot and drive off any individual who was suspected of being a union man or leaning toward unionism. And woe betide him who sought to cajole and persuade any of these men to accept or talk unionism. His day with the company was short. And if caught red-handed, as it were, he was sometimes beaten up and that badly, as a warning to other spies and emissaries of the union, who might be wanting to do the same.

But to return. The morning I arrived it was gray and cold. There was a light flurry of snow about noon. I had, however, managed to muster an old suit and there was my overcoat, which I soon found I did not need. For the work kept me warm enough. At once I was put to work with two

or as though he were trying to catch you. But having read the letter I handed him, he was civil enough, although looking at me all the while as though I would bear watching, an attitude which half-amused and half-irritated me.

However, he was curious as to why I wanted to work here. Plainly I did not look like any of the other men about the place and he could not quite satisfy himself as to that. I might be a spy. At any rate, he was most distant and non-committal. "They want me to keep you outside, I see. Well, there's plenty of outside work." He drew out a silver watch about as large as a muffin and consulted it. "It's a quarter after four now," he observed. "Better call it a day for today and show up here at seven in the morning. If you got an old suit, you'd better wear it."

I thought the one I had on was old enough, but assured him I had another.

"Live anywhere around here?" he asked.

"New York City," I replied, thinking dubiously of the Mills Hotel.

"Well, the train leaves Grand Central at 6:20," he volunteered.

Oh, ho. That means rising at 5:30 for me unless I get some place around here, I thought, and immediately began to study the surrounding landscape. But there were few, if any houses then, and no subway. The Harlem River had not even been cut through direct from Kingsbridge to the Hudson. And Kingsbridge was a village a mile away by rail.

Realizing that I might not soon again have as much time as I now had, I proceeded to Kingsbridge and visited some of the better-looking houses in that vicinity, hoping for a hall bedroom at a low rate—about two dollars. But there were no hall bedrooms. And other rooms were at prohibitive prices. Mostly no roomers were wanted. Plainly it was an idyllic rural residence region. Only by going to a very poor section, did I find an old hotel and saloon combined, a most dilapidated and indifferent affair which was then being conducted by as incompetent and unsuccessful-looking a hotel keeper as I had ever seen. He was German, small and dextrous and confused, with no real skill for anything. He finally showed me a cheerless, barren room on the second floor overlooking a balcony, which I could have for fifty cents a day—\$3.50 per week. I offered him \$2.50 and he took it. At that it was high—dirty and almost unfurnished: a chair, creaky iron bed and a wobbly, unsanitary washstand with a bowl and pitcher. However, on one side ran this balcony and since spring was coming, this promised to prove an advantage. For from my end of the

"That's all right," he said. "I can fix it so you can do all the day labor you want. But I'll make it optional." He turned to one of his assistants. "Take a note to Fred Strong." "You will list the bearer for light outside work under you at fifteen cents an hour with the privilege of change to inside shop work at his option," he dictated.

Then he turned to me again. "I'm sending you down to our yard at Spuyten Duyvil on the Hudson. We have a store house and a manufactory and yard there. We load and reload all sorts of supplies. It's right where the Harlem joins the Hudson. Nice and fresh. Good as a resort in summer." He smiled. I think the note from the Engineer of Maintenance of Way must have impressed him. "You tell him to keep you outside at the easy stuff for a while. Then if you decide you want to change and go with one of these gang foremen later, all you need to do is to write me or come and see me, and I'll change you. You'll see Coyle and his gang up in the yard there now and you can see whether you'd like the type of work he does."

He smiled, went away, dictated a note and came back. "I suppose you want a pass, too," he observed.

"To ride on, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I'd like one."

"Take this." He handed me a note to someone in an office in Grand Central Station who was forthwith to give me a monthly pass. Whereupon having shuttled down to Grand Central on my own, I shuttled back to Spuyten Duyvil on a pass. And about four in the afternoon I arrived at "Spike," as it was called by the men who worked there, as charming a nook in which to work as I have ever seen. It was on a triangular point of land that was bounded on two sides by water and on the land side by the four tracks of the New York Central. And above it on the north rose the heights of Riverdale about five hundred feet. And to the south beyond the Harlem were other hills equally high, and across the Hudson were the Palisades, a beautiful site even on this cold March day.

And inquiring for Mr. Strong I encountered finally a tall, angular, uncouth, big-footed, big-handed, thin-faced and tinheaded man who was as awkward as the most flagrant yokel ever seen at a country fair. And yet he was foreman-general of a shop, a storehouse and a yard. But those minute ferret eyes of his! And his bushy red hair! And he looked and acted, always, as though someone were trying to catch him at something

labor--something light." He rose and disappeared into an inner office, my letter in his hand. Presently he returned.

"You're pretty thin," he said, looking me over. "Been sick?"

(A most efficient youth, this, I thought.)

"Yes, I've been sick," I informed him.

"How much do you weigh?"

"One hundred and thirty seven pounds, but I'll be all right if I can work out of doors," I went on.

"Pretty light for any kind of day labor," he commented drily.

I could not help liking him, he was so smart, airy and self-sufficient without being in any way posy.

"Where's Hanrahan working today?" he turned and asked of a clerk.

"Up at Dobbs Ferry. He's building a coal bin under the depot there."

"And where's Rourke?"

"He's out at Woodlawn. They're resetting the freight house piers."

"Has he any man to help him yet?"

"No, sir."

"And where's Coyle?"

"In the yard at Spuyten Duyvil. He's digging an ash pit."

"These are all mason-foremen," he said, turning to me and scratching an ear dubiously. "They're men with gangs. 'Guineas.' But you couldn't do gang work, could you? It would break your back. They work with pick and shovel, carry cement, wheel stone, carry iron girders occasionally. You couldn't do that. I'll have to make you an assistant to somebody in charge of something." He scratched his ear again.

"But I want to do day labor, if I can, out in the open air. It will be good for me," I insisted, believing truly that it would.

the foreman made him feel that a man could be a part of this world and still be happy, useful, good—to face life without fear and trembling. Put another way, Burke allowed Dreiser to enter this world and rid himself of the long-standing nightmare of succumbing to his father's fate.⁶ At first the old fear rears its head—that "by some trick of fate, I had permanently fallen to some such meager state as this and would never again be able to rise above it"—but at the end Dreiser is hopeful in his new knowledge that he can both be part of Burke's world and walk away from it with his own identity intact. He could work and remain, after all, an *amateur* laborer. This awareness was a significant factor in his uphill climb. In 1903 it loosened at least one psychic knot that had held him in check. And for Burke's part in this internal drama, Dreiser felt compelled to return to him often, in memory and in fiction.

DOWN HILL AND UP⁷

"Up"

by

Theodore Dreiser

The office of the supervisor of buildings in Yonkers was a semi-wooden and brick building which stood at that time a few blocks south of the main station adjoining a railroad yard. Like most outlying railroad offices it was not much. And, although from the tone of the letter handed me I fancied that I was to see the supervisor of buildings himself, I was very much mistaken. During all my period of service with the railroad and under him, I doubt if I ever saw him more than three times.

Instead, on this particular morning I was greeted by a shrewd and most alert and dapper chief clerk, who proved to be the supervisor's secretary, officially known as "third assistant to the supervisor of buildings." Although quite boyish and blonde, this youth evinced himself shortly as one of the most efficient and wisest of all the principals with whom I came in contact. He was entirely surrounded by young men who took dictation or executed verbal orders given by him, and he appeared to be deluged by mail and papers.

"Never worked on the road before, eh?" he asked when I was ushered into his presence, having first sent in my letter.

"No, sir," I replied, "I never did."

"Coming on the road for your health, I see. And you want to do day

of very different men—Peter McCord, William Louis Sonntag, Archibald White, William Muldoon, to name a few. Some of these characters came out of his personal encounters in the 1890s, when he was in his twenties and often eagerly seeking out models to help shape his own uncertain values. That search took on a desperate quality after Dreiser began experiencing the symptoms of neurasthenia that plagued him in his early thirties. During this time, the Irish foreman assumed a special importance for him, and "Up Hill" culminates in a clear statement of the ideal Rourke represents:

I said to myself, "This is the attitude and this is the man--and his policy and his viewpoint are mine from this day forth. I will not whine and I will not tremble, anymore, come what may. I may not be able to write or win in that field, but I will be able to do something somewhere, and that will have to be enough--will have to do. For by the living God, this man and his men in their way, are as happy and useful as any and as good as any. Life is as you think it, no more and no less, and it can be thought of in many ways. And from now on I will strive to present an untroubled front and do with as much or as little as I can--yet, trying, always."

Such a pat conclusion raises questions of its own. Why did Dreiser choose manual labor as the way to regain his health and, more specifically, why did he become so fixated on Burke as an exemplar of moral courage? It would take a long study of the origins of Dreiser's crisis in his early life to answer these questions adequately. Nevertheless, it's clear from "Up Hill" that Dreiser linked his actual performance of the laborer's hard work--and therefore his association with Burke, with whose "consent, too, I did so work"--to his ability to write again. However initially repulsive the men and their toil, it is only after he forces himself to work with Burke's gang, and not merely to settle for the clerical duties he had been assigned, that his creativity returns. Then he can write a lyric poem--an activity as alien to his labor as he could imagine--and dream of once again writing "a form of cadenced, if not exalted prose which bore some resemblance to poetry, if not verse."

Yet it is not simply a healthy mind in a healthy body that Dreiser is promoting here; he could have achieved that at Muldoon's sanatorium, as his brother Paul had urged him to do. Despite Burke's taunting of him for his lack of physical strength, the foreman made it possible for Dreiser to overcome a phobic aversion to the world of the common laborer that originated in his early years in Indiana. Though Dreiser goes out of his way to point out that this arena of manual labor is foreign to him, he in fact grew up in a world full of men like Burke, some of them members of his own family. Dreiser "came fairly to love" Burke in a filial way, because

"UP HILL": A CHAPTER IN DREISER'S STORY ABOUT HIMSELF

Thomas P. Riggio
University of Connecticut

Written in 1924, "Up Hill" is one of eight different stories Dreiser wrote about his time in 1903 as a laborer on the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad.¹ Why did Dreiser keep returning obsessively to this material, and particularly to the character of Mike Burke, the Irish foreman who appears here as Rourke? "Up Hill" holds more clues to Dreiser's motivation than any other version of the story, perhaps because he was twenty years away from the experience and surer of himself than in the period immediately following his nervous breakdown. By 1924 the treatment of Burke lost most of the conflicting comic and sentimental overtones of the earlier pieces: the Irish foreman is neither "a fabled giant...half-god, half-man"² who is killed off in the high melodramatic fashion of the first renditions of "The Mighty Burke/Rourke" nor the subject of scenes of ethnic low comedy--"a perfect scene out of Kilkenny," as Dreiser calls one episode in the *Twelve Men* sketch.³

Though Dreiser cannibalizes the earlier pieces for "Up Hill," the treatment shifts from burlesque and melodrama to moral allegory. Here he moves beyond the vague lesson about Rourke's "ready grasp for the actualities of life"⁴ to a full-blown fable about "The Irish Section Foreman Who Taught Me How To Live," the title he used for the compressed version of "Down Hill and Up" that *Hearst's International* published in 1924. Rourke emerges more clearly in "Up Hill" as one of the many men to whom Dreiser looked for moral support at the time of his breakdown. He included their portraits in *Twelve Men* and other more explicitly autobiographical writing, where they appear as figures who have certain strengths of character that Dreiser felt he lacked before and during the period of his crisis. Dreiser's implicit question in such portraits is nothing less than "What constitutes a whole man in our time?"--a question stemming from the shattered sense of identity he experienced in the years after the publication of *Sister Carrie*. While no one individual served him as a complete ego ideal, he found character traits to admire in a number

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